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United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Culture of peace

Letter dated 3 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Declaration of the UNESCO International Congress on Inter-religious Dialogue and a Culture of Peace, held at Tashkent from 14 to 16 September 2000 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 32 and 33.

(*Signed*) Alisher **Vohidov**

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Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

UNESCO International Congress on Inter-religious Dialogue and a Culture of Peace, held at Tashkent from 14 to 16 September 2000

Declaration

We, the participants in the UNESCO Congress on Inter-religious Dialogue, convened jointly by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of Uzbekistan in Tashkent from 14 to 16 September 2000, do hereby declare that:

1. We affirm, on the basis of the rich and varied insights gained as a result of free and frank discussions on the complex issues pertaining to inter-religious dialogue, our determination to continue our efforts in furthering inter-religious dialogue and cooperation as an important positive step in the struggle for a culture of peace;

2. We address our recommendations for consideration and implementation by religious leaders, UNESCO and the international community;

3. We express our special thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan, and His Excellency Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, for their initiative to convene this Conference and for their inspiring messages;

4. We express our gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Uzbekistan for their generous hospitality and goodwill.

Recommendations

1. Since all religions uphold peace and harmony as an objective of supreme importance and the ethical mission of UNESCO is to promote peace for brotherhood and solidarity among nations, all forms of extremism and terrorism should be condemned.

2. As misunderstandings and misinterpretations between religions, spiritual traditions or cultures arise from ignorance and mutual lack of knowledge, priority should be given to promoting the study and appreciation of all religions at all levels through informal, formal and non-formal education.

3. As memories of past experiences should not be obstacles to mutual recognition and esteem of religions if they are viewed from neither a desire for revenge nor a sentiment of hate, inter-religious dialogue should, where possible, be directed towards facing the past so that memories of past discrimination, persecution and hostilities might be overcome and fraternal solidarity developed between religious groups for the future.

4. To support inter-religious dialogue, UNESCO should:

(a) Work with other international institutions, Governments and religious leaders to develop education at all levels based on a pluralistic and dialogue-based approach;

(b) Support the production of educational materials to foster a better understanding of different religions as an integral part of the "History of the Civilization of Central Asia" and "East-West Intercultural Dialogue in Central Asia" programmes;

(c) Actively encourage and participate in developing cooperation among University Chairs and Departments of Religious Studies and Culture.

5. UNESCO and other related institutions should explore ways and means to:

- Promote and protect with legislative measures, where possible, the freedom of religion and beliefs;
- Prevent intolerance and discrimination based on religion and beliefs;
- Enhance dialogue and cooperation among religions;
- Encourage and support reflection on the place of religion in society and in the State;
- Study the effect of secularism on inter-religious dialogue; and
- Engage in dialogue with all religions in a spirit of pluralism and openness, respecting the principle of the equality of religions.

6. For the purpose of conflict prevention and resolution, religious leaders and institutions, with the support of UNESCO, international institutions, UNESCO goodwill ambassadors and figures of authority, where possible, should:

(a) Work with academic institutions and with one another across religious and cultural boundaries in a respectful spirit of dialogue to promote peace and harmony;

(b) Support efforts to promote education for international understanding;

(c) Foster and encourage wider discussion of potentially conflicting and morally challenging societal issues among the general public as well as meetings of figures of authority; and

(d) Seek and involve the cooperation of networks of institutions and organizations dedicated to peace and conflict resolution.

7. Further for the prevention of the outbreak of violent conflict, UNESCO and international institutions should:

(a) Undertake strategic assessment of the causes and circumstances which could potentially draw religions into supporting violence and/or adopting extremism;

(b) Develop consultative mechanisms and processes between religious communities and Governments as a means of resolving disputes and drawing on religious capacities;

(c) Consider fielding proactive missions of religious conflict-resolution experts at the request or with the consent of the State or States concerned; and

(d) Promote the sharing of information, experiences and resources on religious rights and conflict resolution through all available media.

8. Religious leaders are requested to build solidarity for the well-being of all people, paying special attention to the forgotten poor and exploring imaginative ways and means of ensuring a happy life for all.